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The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East

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The first article in this issue reviews Soviet writing on the Yemen and Aden. The Yemen is an instance of a backward and feudal country which nevertheless enjoys the friendship and support of the USSR. The article shows that Soviet writers in part ignore the Yemen's backwardness and in part seek to excuse it, and express general approval of the Yemen's rulers. The Yemen's claim to Aden is warmly supported by Soviet writers; but on the attitude of Aden nationalists towards this matter Soviet writers express no opinion.

Israel's Socialism is the second of three articles on Soviet views on Israel. Despite some earlier sympathy, Soviet writers now regard Israel's socialism as a "myth". Invective is particularly directed against the Israeli collective, or kibbutz, which has been described by an English writer as "an example of complete economic and social communism".

A leading topic in Soviet Angle on the News is the attitude of the UAR towards communism, towards the Soviet Union and towards China.

THE YEMEN AND ADEN: SOVIET NOTIONS

Since 1928, when the Yemen signed a treaty of friendship and trade with the USSR, the tone of Soviet writing on the Yemen has varied with the state of Yemeni-Soviet relations. In the 1930s Soviet authors wrote with sympathy of the Yemen as a country which was politically and economically at the mercy of Britain. A Soviet reference book written in 1944, COUNTRIES OF THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST, makes critical mention of the Yemen's support for the Axis both before and during the Second World War. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1953) finds no words of commendation for the Yemen, describing it as "a feudal absolutist state of large landowners and trading and usurer bourgeoisie, built on theocratic foundations", a state which was "in semi-colonial dependence on British and American imperialism" and whose rulers and Government were "anti-popular".

A new treaty of friendship between the Yemen and the USSR was signed in Cairo on 31st October 1955, and a trade agreement on 8th March 1956. Under the latter the USSR supplies the Yemen with industrial equipment, agricultural machinery, building materials, petroleum products, flour, rice and sugar; the Yemen exports to the USSR coffee, dried fruit, hides and other commodities. In June 1956 the Yemeni Crown Prince Amir Sayf al-Islam al-Badr visited the USSR, and the main lines of Soviet participation in Yemeni economic development were decided in talks during his visit.

The restoration of friendship was reflected in Soviet writings on the Yemen. A.I. Stupak, in the chapter on the Yemen in the ethnographic symposium PEOPLES OF SOUTH-WEST ASIA (1957), wrote of the Yemen's backwardness but attributed it to the long years of Turkish rule and to the deliberate policy of the Western powers, preoccupied with their strategic aims in this part of the Middle East. The Yemen, said Stupak, was being increasingly drawn into the growing anti-imperialist movement of the Arab countries for peace and national independence.

The eminent Soviet orientalist A. Sultanov, who visited the Yemen in January 1958, wrote with enthusiasm of the traditions of Yemeni-Soviet friendship in an article in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No.6 of 1958:

> "In Hudaydah, as in other towns of the Yemen, the words 'Soviet' and 'Russian' are pronounced with respect. The Yemenis well remember the year 1928, when friendly relations were established between the Yemen and the Soviet Union, and the ensuing period of lively trade between the port of Odessa and Hudaydah, when our ships regularly came here with timber and kerosene, flour and high quality cotton cloth. Merchants here look back on the 1930s as a period of economic prosperity for their country."

Feudalism and progress Expressions such as "the feudal ruling clique", applied to the Yemen's rulers by the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, are not found in more recent works, which speak of the Yemen's ruling family with respect. Sultanov speaks of the "modest" palace of the Yemeni Crown Prince in Hudaydah. (In contrast, Soviet writers have criticized the Saudi Arabian royal family's personal expenditure as extravagant - MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 4, p. 2 and No. 5, p. 10) In COUNTRIES OF THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST (1958) Yu. V. Basistov praises the Imam Yahya as a patriotic leader. He says he was assassinated "by a foreign agent" because he had refused British demands for the cession of territory and had frustrated British attempts to raise a rebellion against him.

Nevertheless, Soviet writers still describe conditions in the Yemen as feudal, with landless peasants at the mercy of large landowners. Basistov says that labour conditions in the ports and in the coffee factories are bad, and that there is "wide-scale exploitation of women's and child labour". Health services and education, he says, are still rudimentary, but new hospitals and schools are being built. Sultanov similarly speaks of new hospitals in San'a, Ta'izz and Hudaydah and new secondary schools and teachers' training establishments, and of the Government's decision to build a proper port in Hudaydah and to construct motor roads between the principal towns. A new and modern San'a, he says, is rising outside the walls of the old town, a symbol of the new Yemen:

> "When this industrious people begins to exploit its incalculable natural wealth - oil and gold, coal, uranium and silver - when industry and agriculture flourish, when the country becomes rich and well organized, then mountainous Yemen, which is noted for its wonderful climate and which can confidently challenge Switzerland for the beauty of its mountains, will become a favourite health resort for the peoples of all the Arab East."

In Saudi Arabia Soviet writers have traced the growth of a workers' movement (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No.4, pp.3-4); they have not done the same for the Yemen, and the Soviet Union's cordial relations with the Yemeni ruling dynasty would presumably prevent them doing so. The Yemen is credited with an "anti-imperialist movement" - that is to say, the country as a whole is represented as hostile to the West; but its people are not credited with a "democratic movement" directed against their rulers. However, Sultanov notes the anti-feudal sentiments of the Yemen's younger generation:

> "We met representatives of the Yemen's younger generation, graduates of Cairo University returning to their country, young agriculturists, engineers and officers. They are burning with the desire to work, to assist the enlightenment of their people and reforming the social life of the country, and to extirpate the remnants of feudalism which prevent the development of the country's productive forces. The youth of the Yemen welcomed

enthusiastically the decision of the Imam and the Crown Prince to unite with the UAR on a federal basis. Yemenis see in this a guarantee of the economic and cultural progress of their country."

Britain and the Yemen Soviet writers claim that the Yemen has repeatedly defeated British attempts to gain control of all or part of the country. Basistov says that after the First World War Britain tried to make the Yemen into a British protectorate, but the Imam Yahya rejected British claims for the cession of territory; and the same writer quotes an Italian newspaper story of a British plan to overthrow the Imam Ahmad in 1956, "parallel with the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt". More than one Soviet writer speaks of British attempts to wrest from the Yemen an "oil-bearing region" near the frontier with Aden. The theme of "aggression" by overwhelming British military forces is a constantly recurring one.

Sultanov alleges that economic domination of the Yemen is also a British objective:

> "Taking advantage of Yemen's not possessing a proper modern port, the British companies based in Aden dictate their prices to the Yemeni importers and exporters... The Yemeni silver riyal is an unstable currency. Its value fluctuates according to world silver prices, and in the Yemen it is determined largely by how much silver the British throw on the Aden market. In the period when the wonderful Mocha coffee crop is ripening the British companies artificially raise the price of silver and thereby increase by 30 per cent the value of the silver riyal. As a result at the height of the season they pay for each ton of Yemeni coffee a third less than normal. When the time of the great Muslim festivals comes and the Yemeni merchants go to Aden to buy British manufactured goods, the same monopolies accordingly lower the price of the silver riyal and the Yemenis have to overpay for their purchases."

The Yemen's claim to Aden Soviet writers give differing accounts of the British seizure of Aden. In THE LAST COLONIES IN ASIA (1958) L.N. Kotlov and Z.I. Levin say that in 1839 Aden was taken by force from the Sultan of Lahaj, who had refused to surrender it, and that in 1850 the same Sultan was compelled to sign an agreement recognizing British suzerainty.

Most Soviet accounts, however, state that Aden was seized from the Yemen and that the Yemen still rightfully claims the territory. The Aden protectorates are frequently referred to by Soviet writers, as by Yemeni propagandists, as "the occupied parts of the Yemen". Sultanov says that from the mountains surrounding the Yemeni royal town of Ta'izz one can see Aden: "in choosing Ta'izz as his capital the Imam Ahmad emphasized his determination to restore the Yemen's right to its southern provinces".

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS of May 1958 points out that the Chinese affirmed their support for the Yemen's claim at the time of the Yemeni Crown Prince's visit to Peking in January 1958.

Aden nationalist movements An account of nationalist movements in Aden is given in THE LAST COLONIES IN ASIA, referred to above. In Aden, say the authors, "Britain's colonial policy encounters determined resistance on the part of the people". After the Second World War, they say, "the liberation struggle assumed a massive character", and an industrial proletariat emerged which, although it embraced different nationalities, had become an active political force. A national intelligentsia had also appeared, and the national bourgeoisie had strengthened its position. The political parties such as the National United Front, which were principally active in Aden, had nevertheless extended their activities to the tribes of the most distant parts of the protectorates. Tribal risings, already frequent before the war, had assumed the proportions of "an all-Adeni movement for independence". Even among the upper and ruling classes anti-British attitudes were becoming more general. The local rulers too played their part, owing to their unwillingness to surrender their privileges to the authorities.

Kotlov and Levin go on to give an account of strikes and demonstrations in Aden and rebellions in the protectorates since the Second World War, with particular attention to events in Lahaj and the deposition in 1952 of Sultan Sir Abd al-Karim Bin Fadl, represented by the authors as a friend of the "anti-imperialist and democratic movement" in his Sultanate and as having proclaimed a constitution which "despite its moderation marked an important victory for the patriotic forces of the Sultanate". Other events (up to 1957) dealt with by Kotlov and Levin are the launching of the Aden Federation Plan, "resolutely opposed by the people's masses of Aden"; tribal risings in Upper and Lower Awaliq and Awdali in December 1953, allegedly so successful that they led to a British "offer to begin truce talks"; the tribal rising in the Qu'ayti Sultanate in 1955, "in connection with the order issued in the interests of the motor transport company forbidding the conveyance of goods from the port of Mukalla by pack transport"; the Aden Township elections of 1953, and the 1955 Legislative Council elections, in which "out of 140,000 inhabitants of the colony only 10,820 had the right to vote"; the strikes and labour disturbances of 1956, and the demonstration at the time of Lord Lloyd's visit in that year; and the departure of the Governor, Sir Tom Hickinbotham, "compelled by the pressure of the masses to go into retirement".

The most recent Soviet account of Aden nationalist movements is given in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No.9 of 1959, in an article by A. Nil'skiy. He outlines the aims and programme of the South Arabian League, which he says is the strongest of the nationalist parties; the programme of the National United Front, he says, "differs little" from that of the South Arabian League. It is noteworthy that this article makes no mention of union with the Yemen as an objective of any Aden nationalist party, unlike some earlier Soviet accounts, nor does it suggest that union with the Yemen should be an objective.

The Aden Federation and British strategy The Aden Federation project is particularly violently denounced in Soviet writings. In an article entitled "Colonialists' new trick", in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS of June 1959, V. Fuzeyev says that, out of 18 shaykhdoms in the Aden Protectorate, "only six small ones" have agreed to join the Federation, which will bind them to take Britain's advice on all questions of policy and will prevent them making contact with any state or organization without British approval. Fuzeyev denounces "this undisguised diktat and these disgraceful terms, reminiscent of the days of classical colonialism". One reason for creating the Federation, he says, is a military one:

> "The British colonialists want to create favourable conditions for building military bases in the area, equipped with atomic weapons. According to the South Arabia League mission in Cairo, an agreement was concluded between Lennox-Boyd and the shaykhs who joined the 'Federation' envisaging the stationing of 70,000 troops, 1,000 aircraft, 500 tanks and other military equipment, including atomic weapons... The entire territory of the southern part of the peninsula is being transformed into a key base in the Middle East for aggression against the peace-loving countries and the national liberation movement of the peoples of Africa and Asia."

In short, the picture of a scheming, brutal and oppressive British imperialism which Soviet writers paint in such lurid colours in fact serves a number of purposes. It is used to excuse and cover up the backwardness and feudal condition of the Yemen, and to present that country as a heroic participant in the "world-wide anti-imperialist struggle" and as thereby deserving the sympathy and support of "peace-loving countries". In the case of Aden it enables Soviet writers to present nationalist and workers' movements there, and even tribal disturbances, as not only a nation-wide resistance movement but also a contribution to the eventual defeat of British "aggressive plans". In other words, Soviet writers set no little store by the threat which nationalist discontent in Aden could present to British strategic plans in the area.

SOVIET VIEWS ON ISRAEL (2): ISRAEL'S SOCIALISM

Most Soviet writings on Israel make little or no mention of the part played by socialist ideas in the politics, economy and community life of the country. Nevertheless, an occasional outburst reveals the bitter animosity with which Israeli practitioners of socialism are regarded by its Soviet exponents. One such outburst is the article "The myth of Israeli socialism" by A.Gorev, published in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No.8 of 1959.

The kibbutzim The Israeli collectives, or kibbutzim, provide a demonstration of communism in practice which represents a standing challenge to Soviet doctrine. In ISRAEL TODAY (London, 1952) Norman Bentwich explains how members of a kibbutz share everything, how the children are looked after by the community, and how the principle "from every man according to his capacity, to every man according to his need", is put into practice. He says:

> "In the kibbutz we have an example of complete economic and social communism. The members work for the community, the order of their labour is directed by the assembly of the community, and the way of life is shared with the community... The Israel kibbutz is altogether differentiated from the Russian collective farm in the Soviet Union because of the absence of any compulsion of the State. The motive force has been in every case the idealism of the members of the group, and not the policy of a Government. It is socialism by consent... The kibbutz has rejected the totalitarian idea, and opposed any attempt to introduce political communism."

A sympathetic Soviet account of the kibbutzim is provided in an article by the Soviet scientist V. Kargin, in NEW TIMES No.30 of 1956. Academician Kargin, who was attending an international scientific conference at Rehovot, visited a kibbutz near Caesarea and another near Haifa. He appears to have been impressed by the efficiency and success of their farming methods. He says:

> "On the whole, these cooperative farms make a good impression, although their leaders make no secret of the fact that they are in bad financial straits: they are short of funds to invest, and interest on loans is very high - up to 20 per cent per annum. The first kibbutz was organized very long ago, at the turn of the century. Now there are about 230 of them, with a membership of approximately 80,000, or nearly one-fifth of the population engaged in agriculture. And they supply 40 per cent of Israeli's agricultural produce. It is evident from these figures that although this system of collective farming has not become the leading form in Israel, it has proved viable and economically sound."

"Hiding under socialist slogans" Now, however, A. Gorev makes a full-scale attack on the kibbutzim in his recent article in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK. He says:

> "The kibbutzim, so widely publicized by Zionist propagandists, were in effect agricultural cooperatives run on the basis of communal ownership of nearly all basic articles and on the basis of wage-levelling. The kibbutzim sprang up after the first

Russian revolution at the time when a large stream of emigrants flowed from Russia to Palestine. With the aid of Jewish funds for agricultural settlement... they then formed these agricultural cooperatives. Members of these kibbutzim were paid no wages for their labour, nor did they benefit by the profits made. These people toiled for 'a slice of bread', for 'a corner of the shed'."

So far, indeed, Gorev makes no overt criticism, though perhaps he implies that the living and working conditions of kibbutz members were not to be envied. But he goes on:

"On superficial observation, the kibbutz undoubtedly presented a fairly idyllic picture. Former lawyers, hairdressers, teachers and craftsmen were transformed into ploughmen, gardeners and shepherds. All became equal. All wore the same clothes, had the same houses and ate the same food. The reality, however, was far more prosaic. The enthusiasm of the Haluz (a movement for opening up new lands) gradually faded, and with time the kibbutzim became military settlements of a particular character."

In fact, says Gorev, the aims of the kibbutz are basically militarist and nationalistic:

"The semi-military organization of the rural commune ensured for its members an efficient means of safeguarding the lands acquired, and on occasion served the purpose of seizing new lands from the Arabs by force... Today the kibbutzim are used by the Government as one of the means for safeguarding the state's frontiers. All members of the kibbutzim are armed, and moreover a period spent in the kibbutzim bordering the frontier counts for young men as a period of military service. The kibbutzim serve as centres where the youth of Israel receives an education of a nationalistic and military character."

The kibbutzim, Gorev asserts, are only socialist in name; at the time when they were established "socialist slogans had already become very popular among working Jews", and those features of collectivism inherent in the kibbutzim "afforded the Zionist leaders the possibility of hiding the reactionary nature of their movement under socialist slogans".

<u>"Zionist monasteries"</u> Gorev goes on to paint a grim picture of conditions in the kibbutzim today:

"Life there is hard. Kibbutzim members are obliged to work 10 hours a day for food, issued in the main canteen, and for their very modest clothes from the central stores. A very small

sum of money is issued to them for pocket money and leave money. People living there groan under a crushing weight of taxation, compulsory loans, obligatory turns of duty in the 'voluntary' frontier guard detachments, and also the burdensome labour involved in the construction of air-raid shelters and other military installations. No matter how long a man may work in a kibbutz, he will leave it as a pauper.

"It is therefore not surprising that very few people are willing to work under such conditions. In all the years of Israel's existence no more than five per cent of the population could ever be found living in the kibbutzim. Even in conditions of permanent unemployment workers refused to join the kibbutzim, labelling them with contempt as 'Zionist monasteries'."

The kibbutzim themselves are sunk in debt, Gorev says:

"Their real ownership has passed into the hands of banks, money-lending concerns and private firms. At the present time debts to banks represent double the value of all kibbutz property, and amount to a vast sum - 305 m. Israeli pounds, or nearly 3,700 Israeli pounds for every kibbutz member... At present the kibbutzim are going through a serious crisis. This is evident from the rate of formation of new kibbutzim. . Of the 223 kibbutzim existing in Israel, 143 came into being before May 1948, 68 from May 1948 to 1950, and only 12 after 1950. In 1957 the kibbutz population amounted to about 78,000."

Kargin in 1956 was an avowedly non-political observer, whereas Gorev in 1959 sees the matter in the context of Israeli policy as a whole. But this is not enough to explain the difference in their two accounts. Gorev, while criticizing, was still prepared to note praiseworthy or encouraging features; he observed, for instance, that in one kibbutz the schoolchildren were writing a composition on "The Sixth Five-Year Plan according to the XXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party". A Soviet writer today, describing Israeli institutions, would not admit any such mitigating circumstances. He might say that the Israeli working people were struggling for a better life and for peace and friendship with the Soviet Union; but he would not admit the existence of any such desire on the part of the Israeli Government or of those who manage Israel's institutions.

SOVIET ANGLE ON THE NEWS

Below are reviewed Soviet newspaper reports on Middle East events published during the period 19th September - 12th October.

"Anti-Soviet campaign" in UAR press. In a PRAVDA article on 19th September P. Yegorov complained that an anti-Soviet press campaign was in progress in the UAR. He said that the Cairo papers AL-AKHBAR, AKHBAR AL-YAWM, AL-AHRAM and AL-JUMHURIYAH had joined the campaign, and also the Damascus AL-JAMAHIR and AL-WAHDAH. "Objective information about the Soviet Union, which Arab readers await with such interest, has almost diappeared from the pages of these newspapers. Anti-communist and anti-Soviet scribblings of many years ago have made their appearance in Cairo bookshops."

On the eve of Khrushchev's visit to Washington, said Yegorov, UAR newspapers had come out with "vicious articles distorting the aims and significance of this visit", calculated to aggravate international tension: they had alleged, in front-page reports from Washington, that the American people were hostile to Khrushchev's visit, "thereby hoping to dampen the great interest taken by all classes in the UAR in the Soviet leader's journey".

Yegorov further complained that UAR newspapers had attacked Moscow radio for its campaign in defence of the Lebanese Communist leader Farajallah Hilu, held in custody by the UAR authorities (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No.9, p.12). Moscow radio, said Yegorov, broadcast "objective information about major world events", and it could no more ignore the movement in defence of Hilu than it could, for instance, disregard the world-wide protest campaign against French persecution of Algerian patriots.

Yegorov concluded by declaring that such attempts to prejudice the Arab people against the socialist countries were doomed to failure.

Trials of communists in the UAR A PRAVDA report from Delhi on 10th October said that the Indian public was showing keen displeasure at the news from the UAR of "secret trials of progressive workers, students and teachers". PRAVDA quoted an article in the Calcutta SWADHINATA acclaiming those on trial as erstwhile front-line fighters against "Anglo-French-Israeli aggression".

UAR-Chinese relations The first reference by a Soviet newspaper to the UAR-Chinese dispute was in PRAVDA of 10th October. (The UAR radio and press on 30th September launched a campaign denouncing China's action in permitting the Syrian Communist leader Khalid Bakdash to speak at the Chinese revolution anniversary celebrations in Peking: he attacked the UAR Government - Ed.) PRAVDA gave, without comment, a New China News

Agency statement denying "slanderous fabrications" about China published in the UAR press - reports that the UAR Embassy in Peking was under surveillance, that a number of Middle East countries had boycotted functions to celebrate the Chinese anniversary, that China was concentrating troops on the Indian and Burmese frontiers, etc. The statement called on UAR newspapers to "value friendship between China and the UAR and immediately to desist from these slanders".

The attempt on Qasim's life In a message to Qasim published in the Soviet press on 9th October Khrushchev expressed his "profound indignation" at the attempt on Qasim's life, and declared:

> "Yesterday Ceylon, today Iraq - these are all links in a single chain of crimes of the dark forces which are trying to halt the irresistible movement of the peoples of the East towards liberation from the age-long oppression of imperialism and reaction, and which, realizing that the ground is slipping from beneath their feet, are resorting to base methods long since condemned by human society. There is no doubt that such crimes, tearing the mask off their inspirers and perpetrators, will lead to a further increase in the vigilance of the peoples and their determination to put an end to the intrigues of reaction and the agents of colonialism."

Iraqi educational mission's visit to the USSR A group of Iraqi educational workers led by the Iraqi Minister of Education arrived in Moscow on 25th September for a visit at the invitation of the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR, according to IZVESTIYA. The delegation arrived in Tashkent on 2nd October, according to PRAVDA VOSTOKA.

The CENTO Council meeting Soviet newspapers published articles on the Ministerial Council meeting of the Central Treaty organization (formerly known as the Baghdad Pact) which opened in Washington on 7th October. Vorovskiy in a PRAVDA article on 12th October denounced CENTO as a danger to peace and security in the Middle East and a threat to the independence of the Middle East peoples. Decisions taken by the meeting, he said, included the building of a strategic road between Turkey and Persia, the modernization of the Turkish ports of Iskenderun and Trabzon, and the linking up of the Turkish and Persian railway systems; such measures had nothing to do with "defence" as the CENTO leaders claimed, but "only serve aggressive aims and represent a direct threat to the security of the neighbours of Turkey and Persia".

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